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ABSTRACT

This report describes a six-year study that was based on 333 questionnaire responses and 16 interviews with randomly selected, sexually active adults. Sections of the report discuss the methods used to select the sample, define the terms used in the questionnaire, and describe the actual questionnaire design. Among the findings presented are that subjects with a high school education or less placed greater emphasis on teaching with (or at) their partners when involved in sex and that a significant rise in sexual satisfaction was registered by those subjects who had completed up to one year of college. A "typical respondent" is profiled, and a summary statement concludes that a love-making couple should be aware of the mutual needs in their sexual relations and should learn both how and when to be more expressive verbally and nonverbally within those situations. (AEA)

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A STUDY

OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION

WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ADULT SEXUAL RELATIONS

by

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1978

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Abstract:

Five year study on communication role within context of adult sexual relations, based on questionnaire-interviews with 349 random Greater Boston adults. Among findings: love-affection expressions most stimulating; strongest correlations between partner satisfaction and non-verbal communications on sexual matters. Questionnaire design assistance from Paul Gebhard, Director, Inst. Sex Research.

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A STUDY OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ADULT SEXUAL RELATIONS:

A SUMMARY

by

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A STUDY OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ADULT SEXUAL RELATIONS

"There is no word more often pronounced than that of love, yet there is no subject more mysterious. Of that which touches us most nearly we know least. We measure the march of stars and we do not know how to love."

--Bonstetten

The Project Goal

What is the role of verbalizing as compared or contrasted to non-verbal communication within sexual intercourse? How necessary or desirable is talk per se, according to a random sampling of adult experience? What communications are preferred and which ones are found objectionable? By whom? When? Why?

The idea of a project to help answer such complex questions first occured to me in 1967 -- while engaged in doctoral research at Syracuse University. It was not until October 1970, however, that time and resources allowed me to begin research that continued till 1977.

The project's aim has been to aid all men and women -- single or married -- who would better understand themselves and their personal roles within their usual sex relations. With increasing freedom (and pressures) for couples to engage in sexual sharing for a variety of needs, there is a natural growth in the public's desire to learn more. With increasing communication breakdowns between lovers - in and out of marriage - there is a compelling need to understand.

As the title indicates, my main concern is with "Love-talk" -- the role of verbal communication within the entire context of adult "love-making" in sex behavior. (The foreplay, intercourse and aftermath periods.)

Through this 6 year study, I have attempted to provide a part, a very modest part, of the monumental data and knowledge which will first be needed to understand such a role. The importance of communication within sexual intimacy deserves far more understanding.

To this end, I have attempted to examine both the verbal and the non-verbal communication practices of representative adult men and women within the overall context of sexual relations, i.e., physical coitus. The emphasis has been placed on the role of talk...in effect, who says what and how, to whom, with what effect.

As is the case with all studies of a scientific nature, there has been no attempt to make moral judgements on the data accumulated, but merely to report and interpret the findings as objectively as possible.

Statistical and scientific jargon will be kept to an absolute minimum within the main text, in the interest of readability. No reader eighteen or over should require a translator to understand what is being said. All too often, however, this is the case with scientific reporting.

And hopefully, the data presented will assist each reader to make his own interpretations in accord with his own perspective or moral values. As Kinsey stated in his research report, moral interpretations are "not part of the scientific method, and indeed, scientists have no special capacities for making such evaluations." The conclusions should offer their own guidance.

Especially, I hope that the presentation of this study will promote among all readers a deeper understanding and appreciation for the highly personal and varied role of communication within man's most intimate interaction. The overall findings may help to serve the highest cause: the sharing of meaningful love between responsible partners--restoring the full dimension of love to love-making.

The Need to Know

> Psychiatrists and analysts find that a majority of their patients need help in resolving sexual conflicts that have arisen in their lives. An increasing number of persons would like to bring and educated intelligence into the consideration of such matters as sexual adjustments in marriage...the premarital sexual adjustments of youth... Before it is possible to think scientifically on any of these matters, more needs to be known about the actual behavior of people."
>
> Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey[1]

Were the giant Dr. Kinsey alive today, there is every reason to believe that he would feel just as strongly that "more needs to be known." In spite

of his massive research plus that of Masters and Johnson, the need for more information continues. But it is not for knowledge per se. The crucial & continuing need is for understanding on how to make one-to-one sex relations most fulfilling to the partners involved.

In recent years, however, there has been an overwhelming emphasis on the physiological nature of love-making. The manuals, the articles, even the research, has concentrated on the physical. One recent best-seller, in fact, Reuben's, Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask, devoted less than one page of the entire volume to the subject of interpersonal talk within the context of intercourse.[2] Some psychologists feel this reflects the all-too-common practice of physicians who base their marital sex advice more on bodily process than the process of communication.

The Sensuous Couple, The Sensuous Man, How to Be An Erotic Man, and Cosmopoliton's, The Love Guide, are only a few of the scores of popular seductive titles in the "how to" genre--but they are much more concerned with the tangible do's and don'ts than they are with how sex partners communicate their their love or affection.

Review the statistics of the publishing money-makers of the past decade and it would seem that Everyman's ideal is to become a Don Juan debauchee, and Everywoman's goal to be a Playboy Bunny. After trying, of course, to be stapled at the centerfold. The problem for many is seen by a dispassionate dame in a Mort Gerberg cartoon: "I happen to be a very giving person--it's just that I have nothing to give."

Far too little attention has been given to the role of interpersonal communication within the overall context of physical love-making, especially the verbal language of love. Unfortunately, for counselors, knowledge of the role of speech within sex relations still is at a primitive stage. Extensive research for data indicates that only one study of substance has related--Dr Roy Hedges' study of communication on sexual matters using graduate, married students on one college campus.[3]

Yes, the need for knowlege continues.

Gathering Data

How did I gain sufficient "representative data" to make the whole project worthwhile?

Of all the words and phrases in the lexicon of statistical reserach, perhaps none are more hallowed and revered than these --"significance" and "validity" and good old "representative, random sampling." I set out to plan a project in which all three could feel comfortable.

To begin with, no survey research project worth its median can go far without insuring a population that will adequately supply the needed information. And in this regard, much guidance came from the experts in the field of sampling opinions. Here is what I mean, for example, by "Sampling:"

> "The use of a definite procedure in the selection of a part, for the express purpose of obtaining from it descriptions or estimates of certain properties and characteristics of the whole."[4]

In other words, if I had any intention of projecting my sex communication findings from one group of people onto the general public, I must be sure I had the right group to sample in the first place. I needed a definite procedure--one that would insure "randomness of selection." And what does that mean? Simply that no matter what overall population area I wish to survey, I must be sure that everyone in it has an equal chance of selection.[5]

In order to accomplish this, it was decided to launch a date-gathering program that would be balanced between an objective survey questionnaire able to reliably gather both facts and opinions, and a significant number of in-depth personal interviews. For validation, ten per-cent of the respondents (30) were interviewed in depth and an equal, additional number of partners provided anonymous tape recordings of what they considered typical experiences in their mutual sexual relations. I realized that the survey questionnaire would have to be most carefully constructed so as to keep bias to a minimum and that it would have to be pre-tested--i.e., tried out--on a sample public. This would help insure its reliability for general use. I also knew that to have maximum validity, the questionnaire and interviews should be completed on some random-sampling basis.

For decades, this sampling matter has been a major stumbling block for explorers in the field of behavioral research and sex in particular. So often their research draws flak because the researched persons are not representative of the general public. Projects use volunteers, well-meaning, interested individuals, members of a certain group or organization, persons who likely as not are even paid for their assistance. And whatever or whoever they are, the charge so often hurled is, "They certainly are not typical; they cannot be considered 'representative'."

To avoid this charge--to help avoid it, it's probably impossible to be completely protected--I decided to place the major emphasis on a random sample population. I included volunteers for comparison sake, (from press advertising) but placed the primary weight and focus on a substantial group of men and women--at least 200--gathered completely at random from a major population area.

Kinsey's advice on this was most helpful:

> "Whenever, as in the present survey, it is not feasible to secure a strictly randomized sample, a combination of 100% sampling and controlled partial sampling seems the best that can be done. To attempt to base the entire study on 100% sampling would be impossible to secure such complete samples in sufficient number from all of the diverse groups in a population.[6]

The Population Area

In this project, I chose metropolitan Boston as the population area I wished to sample. The reasons are several.

First of all, Boston has a wide variety of socio-economic and religious-cultural and racial-ethnic backgrounds. Although the city itself has barely 640,000 persons, the metropolitan area has a population of three times that, covering a region at least 25 miles north, south and west of the city's core.[7]

Some have even likened Greater Boston to a microcosm of America's economy and its people. Encompassing as it does a hub of interstate and overseas commerce, with business and professions of all types, it offers an alphabet of backgrounds. The people of Greater Boston include large numbers of the New England Yankee, the Irish or Italian emigrant with their families and the

largely ghettoized American Black. These are perhaps most prominent. But all cultural and racial backgrounds are represented and at all educational levels.

It is this area of education which was a major factor in selecting Greater Boston. Justly called, "The Athens of America," the city and its suburbs boast more colleges and schools of higher learning per capita than any other U.S. city. And because of this, it offers a superlative change to sampler the opinion and experience of typical college students. Some 200,000 of them reside in Greater Boston during the academic year.[7] Although as many as 70,000 students may claim legal, year 'round residence in the metropolitan area, the bulk of them provide a wide cross-section of opinion; every state and foreign nation is represented in this collective student body.

The population area chosen for my study shows the following breakdown of total residents:[8]

Boston proper.....	640,000
Suburbs, Metropolitan Area.....	2,000,000
Adjacent areas served by Boston press (est).....	560,000
Area college students (with permanent residence outside Metropolitan Area).....	100,000
Estimated population for study area:	3,300,000

Who Do I Ask? Selecting the Sample

When Albert Kinsey completed his massive national study of American male and female sex habits, he and his staff had completed 18,000 interviews[9] with a U.S. population at the time of about 180 million. This equalled a personal contact ratio of 1 to 10,000. This is far more than the incredibly small sample of 1500 citizens used by the Gallup organization for their national opinion polls.[10] (Basically accurate as they are).

Masters and Johnson based their most recent national research study on a total of nearly 700 men and women--and as we mentioned, all of them were volunteers and carefully screened beforehand.[11]

In this project, it was decided to take the more cautious approach and use the contact proportions employed by Kinsey and his associated (1 to 10,000). That is, for every 10,000 persons in the survey area of 3.3 million, there must be a

completed survey questionnaire and/or interview. This meant a minimum of 330 male and female respondents would be required.

So that there would be a reasonable chance of securing this figure of 330 completed questionnaires, it was decided to distribute 1800 of them throughout the Boston metropolitan area. Depth interviewing before and afterwards would be required as well, but the primary task would be to design an appropriate form and then make sure that it was properly apportioned over the survey population.

Questionnaire design was explored in detail, and a sample is attached of the 36 question instrument.

But let me first tell you how the 1800 forms were allocated over Greater Boston. I wanted to be sure that there was a fair balance between the residents of Boston proper; the college students in the area; and the satellite citizens who lived in the suburban communities around the city. With all this in mind, here is the breakdown used for questionnaire distribution:

For residents of Boston city.....600
For college students in Greater Boston.....600
For request from Personal Ads placed
in Boston and suburban newspapers.....300

Out of these 1500, I hoped to reach that target response of 330. As reported later, we made it with precious little to spare: 333 completed returns plus an added 16 volunteer interviews. (A major influence in attempting to reach a population sample of at least 300 came from Kinsey's own research. In sample selection, he noted that this total usually provided a significant base, and "give results which are nearly identical to those obtained from the largest samples."[12]

In sampling opinion on a random basis, it should be stressed that a virtual trail of booby-traps awaits the researcher. Even the experienced can be caught. Assume that he knows the dangers of a biased or improperly worded questionnaire, the danger of faulty interpretation of data, the use of improper statistical methods, improper interviewing technique, and the lack of sufficient data on which to base his conclusions. Let's assume all this.

He must also know how to effectively plan his geographic sampling of opinion--unless the population is so small he can interview everyone. And obviously I

couldn't meet every Bostonian!

A. The Boston City Sample

To insure that everyone in the city of Boston has an equal chance of being one of the 600 asked to cooperate, the city was divided into its 10 political sub-divisions. This is known as stratifying the sample and is usually advised where a large heterogenous population is involved. Sometimes it's called "positive stratification", but regardless of label, it is the right method for a large mixed-up urban area.[13]

It's probably the most widely used technique of all since stratification allows you to study a major population with each of the major sub-groups or "strata" tapped in proper proportions.

Using random code numbers,[14] a total of 25 street locations and alternates were randomly chosen from each of the 10 political sub-divisions of Boston proper. Care was taken to see that the sub-divisions totals were roughly proportionate to that section's population. In this way, I was able to allocate between 24-135 questionnaires to each sub-division--and know that each one was balanced in a total cross-section of Boston.

I found that 18 of the random street selections were in residential areas. This meant everything from slum tenemants to upper-income one-family homes. At each unit, residents were briefly interviewed as to interest and qualifications (age, residence) and the forms were given at different times and dates on a one-to-one basis, door-to-door, a brief qualifying interview was conducted to check on age, residence and basic interest, before handing the person the questionnaire.

All in all, this equalled a random sample distribution of 600 questionnaires for adult residents in the city of Boston.

To be sure that a proper spectrum of individuals and sub-groups would be screened for receiving the questionnaire, I was well aware of an old warning by pollsters Stephen & McCarthy. Their words of caution noted that "the primary sampling unit is the cluster of adults on a city block."[15] However, since adults living in such close geographic proximity will tend to have "like" educational attainments and "like" economic status, among other characteristics, they will

also tend to have "like" opinions and attitudes. This is something called "a positive intra/class correlation:" between residents of the same block.[16] It reflects the charge of middle class bias so often hurled at public opinion polls.

Therefore, to avoid the risk of excess similarity of opinion, the street locations chosen at random were further increased. This meant aditional streets were selected at random, within each subdivision; usually only one or two were required. And at each of these added locations, 3 or 4 more residents were contacted, again on a random basis.

Coupled with the 25 different geographic areas throughout the city, this multiple randomizing added extra insurance against too much "alikeness" of opinion.

The Shopping Areas

The shopping districts chosen at random added an especially valuable variety of citizen types to the polling. While greater care was needed in screening each shopper for qualifications, there was much benefit in having so many diverse public locations from which to draw prospects.

For some reason, there was a noticeably higher refusal rate among the shoppers than among those first contacted at their own front doors. Perhaps individuals simply feel more secure in their own homes--and have more time to talk there than they do with the pressure of time, shopping, and the public setting.

At any rate, I decided to contact as diverse a sample as possible in each shopping area chosen. Many shoppers--an equal number of men and women overall--were simply stopped on the sidewalk, others upon leaving stores, or while seated in their parked cars. Still others were merchants or clerks alone in their stores. Three out of four stopped to listen and allowed me to complete the qualifying interview.

Here are specific locations at which and <u>in</u> which screenings and distributions were made. The most popular location was the supermarket, but a balance was reached among all distribution sites. Included among them, at least one of each of these:

Bar	Flower shop	Liquor store
Barber Shop	Five & Dime store	Luncheonette

Bowling alley	Gas station	Magazine shop
Bank	Grocery store	Police station
Beauty parlor	Garage	Parking lot
Candy store	Hardware store	Pizza parlor
Cafeteria	Insurance agency	Restaurant
Drug store	Laundromat	Taxi Dispatch Office

B. The College Student Sample

In order that the adult sample could be compared with the attitude response of representative college students residing in and around the city of Boston, it was decided to personally distribute an equal number of questionnaries (600) to male and female college students in the Metropolitan Boston area. Why not stay with the city proper as we had done with the adult sampling? One main reason: of the four-year colleges and universities in Greater Boston, only 15 were in the city limits--and many of the leading institutions were located in the suburbs.

Therefore, using a random sample selection system, a random sampling of colleges in Greater Boston was drawn. As was the case with the city subdivisions, the college populations were also stratified to insure an equal balance of both public and private colleges. (The latter are more numerous in Greater Boston.)

Here are the school chosen with allocations of the 600 questionnaires:

Public Colleges:

Boston State College, Boston	83
Massachusetts College of Art, Boston	20
Salem State College, Salem	80
University of Massachusetts, Boston	100
	283

Private Colleges:

Babson Institute, Wellesley	30
Boston University, Boston	165
Cardinal Cushing College, Brookline	35
Radcliffe College, Cambridge	57
Suffolk College, Boston	30
	317

To further insure balance, the forms were apportioned so that there would be equal number of both male and female students receiving the questionnaire--300 for each.

In terms of the percentage of students represented at each selected college, the median was close to 2%. That is, on the average, 2 out of every 100 undergraduate and graduate students at each chosen college received questionnaires on a random distribution basis.

While this doesn't seem like a sufficient number on which to base conclusions

about the total student bodies involved, we should remember the contact ratio here is far higher than that of a Gallup Poll with its 1-100,000 national ratio.

College Distribution

In addition, sampling was conducted in a scrupulously random manner to be sure that nearly all students had an equal chance of receiving the survey questionnaire. I say "nearly all" because of two requirements that were used to screen students. During pre-testing of questionnaires, only juniors and seniors were allowed to receive the form. This restriction was later set aside, however, when it was realized (via student interviewing) that a substantial number of "sexperienced" young students--over 18 years and possessing experience in sexual relations--were being deprived of representation in the college survey. The same basic argument was used for the inclusion of the graduate students. With this background, therefore, the final requirements were liberalized: for all colleges represented, any undergraduate or graduate student, male or female, could receive a final questionnaire if (1) he/she were 18/ or over; and (2) he/she had completed at least one full-time semester at the college being surveyed.

Through help-wanted ads in college newspapers, upperclass students at the randomly selected colleges were selected as "Project Assistants" for questionnaire distribution. Usually sociology or psychology majors, these male and female 'reps' received orientation in the procedures of distribution and coaching in the steps of the qualifying interview.

For example, it was quite important , of course, to insure that the questionnaries would not be passed out to just any student in a haphazard way. Factors such as locations for screening interviews, the time of day and night used for such meeting-distributions, were particularly important if the questionnaires were to be treated seriously, and the distribution cc idered properly random.

This matter of initial screening deserves further comment. Certainly I didn't want forms passed out like so many flyers advertising a new pizza parlor. Students also had to be screened at to age, college status, and interest in participation, before given the form. What helped a great deal here was the fact

that students were allowed to explain the survey-forms to students of their own sex. This worked out satisfactorily on each campus.

No Project Assistant reported any difficulty in the screening or distribution of 225 forms at two public and two private colleges. I experienced no difficulty with any student at any time.

One tangible help to all Project Assistants was the questionnaire insert, TO PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY, distributed with the Q form. This one paper, used with all sample forms, assured the recipient that his identity would remain anonymous and outlined the steps that had been taken to insure this. It further requested the randomly selected student to return the form blank even "if you choose not to complete this." Even the blanks could tell us something. (And they did--50 blank forms were returned, due to apparent lack of experience with intercourse.)

How Does One Ask?

Defining Terms

Before reporting the results, some clarification is needed. There may be some doubt as to how key terms in the questionnaire were--or are being--interpreted; terms such as talking, communication and sexual intercourse.

Let me explain these more fully here. First, the most basic:

Sexual Intercourse. Granted there is no sharply defined point in time when intercourse begins exactly--when partner interaction suddenly becomes foreplay, or when foreplay suddenly ceases to exist. The act of orgasm to be sure, may be used as a reliable signal of the ending phase of intercourse, and the beginning of "afterplay" or "resolution" where as Van de Velde put it, "its summit and its purpose alike blend." If borders exist, they are misty boundaries at best. The experience may be quite different psychologically for each partner.

However, there are universal bodily responses for all consenting partners which help to keep the time periods separate. And in several of the questions results to follow, the separation of intercourse into three separate phases reflects a reality understood by nearly all experienced adults.

Only three persons--two males and one female--objected to my "narrow" use of this term intercourse--although the term was never specifically defined in the questionnaire. Based on total returns and validation interviewing, however, all respondents understood the word and equated it with everything from "sexual union" and "copulation" to "balling" and "fucking." The synonyms seem endless.

Talking and Communication. If we were to check Websters Dictionary we would find that--with all the shades of meaning allowed--the primary meanings given each seem very much the same. That is, talk is "to put ideas into, or exchange ideas by spoken words; speak, converse." Communication, says Websters, is "a giving, or a giving and receiving, of information, signals or messages by talk, gestures, writing, etc." Both deal in expression of thoughts, ideas, feelings. Both imply a sender and a receiver.

The major difference seems to be in the fact that talk is usually understood as verbal expression through the voice, communication itself is expression through a variety of means--it is not restricted to speech.

> Talking and communicating, of course, are not necessarily the same thing. The words may be uttered but not understood, or not even listened to.

Guidance author Theodore I. Rubin writes:

> "Communicating to me, connotes the conveyance of information or ideas as well as feeling--knowing. Again and again, I have seen people talking to each other without giving one another any information, any aspect of self, any aspect of feeling." 17

I agree. The distinction should be kept in mind; talking and communicating are not necessarily the same. They may be.

For the purposes of this study, then, we have tried to keep the two separate. The terms talk and talking are consistently used to refer simply to verbalizing--the giving and/or receiving of spoken words or spoken messages. The term communicate and communicating refer to giving and receiving all forms of interpersonal expression, verbal or non-verbal.

There were other general terms and phrases used in the questionnaire, but they were easily understood by the typical respondents. Without narrowness of definition, each person was allowed to relate more fully to his/her own experience.

Pre-testing and validation testing of the questionnaires, showed that a high majority of respondents understood the words used in their appropriate connotations. Where confusion or misunderstanding was evident in a reply, the doubtful response was counted as a "Difficult to say."

Designing the Questionnaire

There is a true art in asking questions. Some years ago, the President of the Interview Research Institute--one of America's top opinion researchers--wrote a book about this art and offered this advice:

> "The most critical need for attention to wording is to make sure that the particular issue which the questioner has in mind is the particular issue on which the respondent gives his answers."[18]

But to give the questioner room for navigation, he added: "An integrated questionnaire explores the problem comprehensively from many angles."

Therefore, wanting to stay with our particular issue "comprehensively", four different mail questionnaire (Q) drafts were designed and duplicated and tested, before the fifth and final choice. With such a delicate area, and one in which so many emotions would come into play, the question building was an above-average challenge, to say the least.

As stated in the Introduction, much assistance in the Q design came from Dr. Paul Gebhard of the Institute for Sexual Research at Indiana University, and from Dr. Roy Hedges' pioneering sex-communication dissertation at Florida State University.[19] A number of other professionals also provided guidance.

I decided that a majority of the questions should concern the study's primary concern--verbal communication within sexual relations--but that allowance should be made for the role of the non-verbal as well. With this in mind, the covering letter stresses that it is a study of <u>communication</u> in sexual relations, without any preferential stress on verbal vs. non-verbal methods.

Type of Questions

In the exploring of attitudes and perceptions, it is unfair to expect any one question to be completely efficient. Through misunderstanding or misinterpretation,

poor reading or poor listening--it is far too common for a single question or even a single type of question to capture only a part of the respondent's thoughts on the issue. And because physiological phenomena are invariably more complex to interpret than objective or factual type data, a variety of questions are preferred in attitude research.

Not all of the questions need have an apparant reference to the main concern of your research. That is, there may be related issues to ask about--questions not precisely on the subject but which provide for intriquing comparisons and testing of the information received. I call them correlative questions. Several were used in the final Q form. As Kahn & Cannell put it, "The interviewer's purpose is to explore completely the area of the psychological field represented by the particular belief or attitude."[20] The best way to do this is through different types of questions--closed, open, multiple choice, in effect, a mixed bag.

To this end, I modeled questions after the classic "Quintamensional Plan of Question Design", developed by George Gallup, of the American Institute of Public Opinion. It is a design useful for probing public opinion on almost any type of issue and at all stages of opinion formation.[21]

CONCLUSIONS

Robert Frost once said that, "A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom." I feel the same way about love. And the same about this research. But isn't it true as well, that the creative effort may begin with wisdom and end in delight? Isn't there a greater likelihood that as our wisdom (or knowledge) increases, so too will our delight (satisfaction) with our abilities in that area of knowledge. Correlation testing here and in other reports has often indicated this.

Unfortunately, in the course of this study, there were many people encountered who believed that this area of communication in sexual behavior was one better left untouched. Ordinary citizens--men or women--the majority of those contacted simply did not want to get involved even on an anonymous basis. While hundreds did cooperate, the difficulty in obtaining a greater participation does reflect on the extent of anxiety and insecurity felt by many average citizens--young and old alike. Some seemed genuinely afraid of the subject--perhaps of

going too deeply--of questions best kept in the dark. For fear of having hidden concerns and unhappiness expressed? Perhaps.

There are others--and some few professionals-- who believed that such research would not be very helpful; they followed Freud's reasoning that people's behavior is influenced very little by knowledge or information and to a much greater degree by emotional disposition and experience. A research project such as this, they would argue, contributes little if anything to such emotional experience.[22]

Certainly, the acquiring of factual information per se is not necessarily correlated with improvement of behavior. But in many cases it is. Particularly, as correlation testing in this study and other sexuality studies have shown, the rise in adult education levels is positively related to a rise in adult sexual satisfaction. To be sure, this rise in satisfaction is for a majority and not for all adults involved in sex relations.

The relationships could be phrased as follows:

(a) Educational attainment for both men and women correlated with the sexual satisfaction with one's partner; further,
(b) Sexual satisfaction with one's partner correlates with less use of verbal communication on sexual matters.

In short, what is being suggested here is that those surveyed men and women who had a high school education or less did not rate as highly in sexual satisfaction as those with some college education--and that as a result, the lower educated men and women were found to place greater emphasis on talking with (or at) their partners when involved with sex.

First, findings in this study indicate that as one's education increases beyond high school, sexual satisfaction with one's partner increases also. (In this study, the significant rise in sexual satisfaction was registered up to the completion of one year of college. Further years did not produce significant gain.)

A number of leading researchers have shown similar findings. Kinsey found that better educated women, for example, had broader sexual experience and enjoyed it more fully. Sociologist Lee Rainwater compared women of lower economic classes with those of the middle class (and higher education levels) and found that the

latter group rated their sexual satisfactions more highly.

The Individual vs. the Norm:

Without doubt, sexual relations and the communications used by individual partners within them are uniquely personal and they defy a truly objective judgement. Partner attitudes and behavior may not need modifying.

When this finding was compared with tests between totals on who would talk the most during sex relations' and educational attainment, similar results were obtained. A stronger relationship was indicated between the talkers and those with a high-school education or less--especially in the case of the surveyed females.

A probable explanation for this may be found in the relating of lower education with lower sexual satisfaction with the more likely use of partner talk on sexual matters.

Once again, however, I feel that a word of caution is in order. Each of us must be considered an individual with particular needs and wants--in sex as in all relations. Whereas any one of us may find that a statistic or finding in this report matches his or her own behavior pattern, none of the findings reported should be considered the norm or standard to follow. As Brecher sagely notes in his review of Human Sexual Response:

> "It is usual and normal to vary from the norm. Individual variations are often in fact improvements rather than defects."[23]

These findings, therefore, should not be interpreted as prescriptions for any partner or couple to follow--that decision is inevitable their own. But while personal prescriptions are not fully possible, (nor actually intended) we are able to review the leading findings in this project and attain a deeper understanding of our subject: the nature of communication within the full context of sexual intercourse itself.

Looking back over the entire project, certain findings about the surveyed population should be highlighted, before drawing any final conclusions. To assist in this, I shall create a profile of the most typical respondent. Not the most

normal--the most typical in this research:

Whether male or female, he/she was an unmarried student aged 22 with no children who had completed 2-3 years of college, but had not received any formal education.

Descended from white European ancestry (both parents) he/she was a nominal member of a Roman Catholic or Protestant church but rarely if ever attended and engaged in no church activity.

He/she grew up in an urban-city environment, and at survey time still resided in a similar city or metropolitan area, living with others, frequently including his/her mate-sex partner.

Regarding sexual intercourse, he/she averaged 10-12 acts of intercourse per month.

In terms of communication behavior within sexual relations, he/she felt that both talk and body language were important to personal satisfaction, but preferred to use non-verbal communication in deciding when sex relations would occur; when they did begin, talking was important to both--shortly before and shortly after intercourse--with the male doing most of the talking, even though the female felt it was more important overall. The type of words and phrases which both found most stimulating were those "expressing love and affection"; the talking found most objectionable was the use of obscenities--i.e., "four letter words or other 'taboo' terms."

The typical male felt that he was in love with his mate (his regular partner) and so did the typical female. However, he did not feel it was necessary to be in love with his partner "to achieve maximum satisfaction within intercourse." She did.

Both felt free to converse with their respective sexual partners about any concern--in or out of sex relations--and when they did converse, found each other to be good listeners.

They "usually" experienced climax in their sex relations although the typical woman did substantially less than the man. In trying to communicate about their

each reaching a climax, they relied mainly on verbal communication, such as "talking over the matter together," or "following each other's spoken comments of brief suggestions.

They were usually satisfied with the number of times in which they had sexual intercourse, and usually satisfied with their communications with each other on sexual matters or within sex relations itself.

Our typical respondents were also sexually satisfied with their partners--but had some reservations; and they were somewhat more satisfied in areas "apart from sex relations" than on a strictly sexual level. In terms of how their partners would rate them, each felt his partner would be slightly more satisfied sexually.

Each had little suggestion to offer their partners "to improve communication" within their sex relations; when they did, it was mainly related to some desired change in the partner's verbal behavior--particularly as this is related to being more sensitive to their individual needs.

Typical suggestions by the female: "Be more loving.....be more caring." Typical suggestions by the male: "Be more unihibited.....be more expressive."

Based on project data, the most harmonious match would appear to be between the average male adult and the average female student. Their responses showed the highest degree of similarities in areas of communication behavior and sexual satisfaction.

Of course, any review of such diverse reaction and individuality necessarily suffers through synopsis. Specific percentage findings for all questionnaire replies are available on request.

In Summary

"I use the terms communicate and relate almost interchangeably."
-- Dr. Theodore Isaac Rubin[24]

Numerous scholars have repeatedly cited the importance of personal sensitivity in communications dealing with a couple's sexual relationship. Whether verbal or non-verbal, each form of communication is filled with emotional and symbolic meaning, and each couple must work out for themselves the most appropriate forms, for the

most appropriate times. For example, although most respondents believe that talking is the best way of overcoming sexual differences, talk by itself is often not enough, and for some may not even be advisable. As Hedges has already shown, "nonverbal communication may be viewed as a safer approach to sexual differences."[25]

Whatever the means of communication chosen by the partners concerned, the many suggestions and reactions received in this study make these final points very clearly:

1. Married or single, the love-making couple should be more aware of their mutual needs in their sexual relations. Too many partners do not adequately understand their own needs and desires, in relation to those of their mates.

2. To best satisfy their needs in sexual relations, most partners should learn both how and when to be more expressive verbally and non-verbally within sexual relations--to provide both sexual stimulation and a sense of loving worth. This is particularly desirable for the periods shortly before and shortly after intercourse.

Overall, the right sexual adjustment is usually a byproduct of a satisfying human relationship. And the latter assumes that each partner has the desire to satisfy both his own needs and those of his partner. It assumes these emotional needs are being satisfied.

In short, a relation of caring and concern between each partner appears to shape the communications that satisfy.[26]

A Postscript:

Continuing Needs:

As outlined at the beginning, there are great areas of sexual ignorance and misinformation which need to be dispelled from love-making. This pertains to both the single and the married couple.

But let's look again at this word 'married': Since most young men and women are involved in sexual intimacy, and a majority have or will have intercourse with regular partners, the legality of the traditional marriage has become less important. Fifteen per cent of the single male and female students who cooperated in this survey, for example, were nevertheless living with their sexual partners, and

practicing a form of de facto marriage. They are not and should not be considered extreme or exceptional. Such relations are reported across the nation. In the final analysis, the term 'marriage' must be defined and then honored by the couple involved, and there is much evidence indicating that most of these trial marriages are defined responsibly and supported by the concerned partners. However, with students and youth generally, seeing sex as a significant part of their new freedom and adulthood, the rising revolution in sexual mores has also brought a substantial rise in sex-with-affection relationships.[27]

Whether we choose to call the sex relations pre-marital or trial, responsible or immature, the existence of these marriage type relationships must be recognized as a major social grouping. Increasingly, these young men and women live with one another and/or regularly share bed and board, love and affection, with normal communication problems such closeness brings. And hence, the need for guidance.

Like other legally married adults, these "love-couples" often seek counsel to help understand themselves and their mutual needs in both living and loving together. Whether they marry each other or not, most of them will eventually "marry" someone, and their pre-marital patterns of sex-conduct most probably will be carried into their future relations--for whatever result. Their current handling of sex and interpersonal problems will certainly influence their sex behavior for many years to come. Because of this, it is crucial that each partner learn how to develop a feeling of sexual satisfaction and personal worth. To do this, each one needs to build the confidence that comes from mutual understanding and the successful experience of shared love.

In brief, the needs for more education in the needs and responsibilities of sexual relations are continuing ones. This report has attempted to help meet some of them, but much extensive research is still needed--across the nation and the world. Research can build new understanding and attitudes. It may also work to modify sexual experience, so that partner communication (verbal and non-verbal) will improve, and there will be a greater wisdom and delight in each partner's sharing of themselves.

If the spirit of love can be renewed or returned to the act of love-making--for only a few--then this research has been well worth the time.

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